

What to Expect During an MRI

What is an MRI?

An MRI (or magnetic resonance imaging) is a painless imaging test that creates detailed pictures of any organ, bone, or tissue inside the body. An MRI involves special magnets, radio waves and a computer, but not X-rays. MRI's are helpful in diagnosing and assessing the extent of injuries and disease.

Preparing for Your MRI

- **Clothing & metal:** You'll be asked to remove metal items (jewelry, watches, hairpins, hearing aids, piercings, etc.). You will be required to change into a hospital gown.
- **Medical history:** A Technologist will screen you for:
 - Pacemakers, implants, metal fragments, or surgical clips
 - A history of kidney problems
 - Claustrophobia or anxiety
- **Food & drink:** Most MRI's don't require fasting, but some do—follow your appointment instructions.
- **Contrast media:** Some MRI's use contrast. If so, it's given through an IV and usually causes only a cool sensation.

During the MRI

- You'll lie on a padded table that slides into the MRI scanner (a short tunnel).
- The technologist can see and hear you the entire time and you'll have a call button if you need help.
- **Staying still is very important,** movement can blur the images.
- Exams typically last **20–60 minutes**, depending on the study.

Noises to Expect During an MRI

MRI scanners are loud during image-taking because of rapidly changing magnetic fields. The sounds are normal and expected.

Common Types of MRI Noises

- **Knocking / Banging:** Rhythmic, repetitive thumps
- **Buzzing / Humming:** Continuous electrical-like sounds
- **Clicking / Tapping:** Faster, lighter pulses
- **Thumping / Jackhammer-like sounds:** Deeper, more forceful rhythms

These noises may change throughout the exam as different images are taken.

How Loud Is It?

- MRI noise can range from **80–110 decibels (dB)**
 - ~80 dB: Busy city traffic
 - ~100 dB: Motorcycle or power tools
 - ~110 dB: Concert-level sound
- Because of this, you'll be given **earplugs, headphones, or both**.
- Many facilities also offer **music** to help reduce stress.

The noise can sound intense, but it's harmless when hearing protection is used.

Please click the following link for an example of some sounds you may hear during your MRI. Please turn your volume all the way up.

<https://youtu.be/hvXoHU9Cexk>

Comfort & Coping Tips

- Practice slow, steady breathing.
- Keep your eyes closed if that helps with claustrophobia.
- Focus on the rhythm of the sounds—they often follow patterns.
- Ask ahead of time about:
 - Music options
 - Mirrors or prism glasses
- All Southcoast MRI units are considered wide bore.
- You can usually return to normal activities right away.
- If contrast was used, drink extra fluids unless told otherwise.
- A radiologist will review the images and send results to your provider.
- Once results are complete, they will be available in your MyChart.